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Matthew L. Saidel MD
20 West Avon Road
Avon, Ct
06001
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Senator Joe Crisco
Representative Bob Megna
Chairs Insurance Committee
State Capitol
Hartford, Connecticut

Dear Senator Crisco and Representative Megna,

As a Connecticut resident and a physician providing health care to women, I am writing to express my concern about Senate bills 12 and 97, both of which would eliminate the reference to national clinical guidelines for breast MRI and therefore would enable every woman with dense breasts to obtain an MRI (in addition to an ultrasound) with no co-pay.

One is tempted to say that in an ideal world, with an infinite health care dollar, that we would like to do every test on every person, every day to catch any disease at the earliest possible moment. First of all we do not live in that world. We have a responsibility to allocate our resources responsibly. The health care dollar is finite. Many healthcare initiatives are underway in both the private and public sectors to help us figure out how to pay for our healthcare and to make sure that our children will be able to afford healthcare. Money spent on expensive MRIs will have to take away from something else.

Secondly we cannot overlook the possibility of doing more harm. MRIs have a high false positive rate, which means we will be doing lots of biopsies on things that aren't cancer. This is acceptable in a very high risk population because the chances of breast cancer are high enough to warrant the risk of false positives. It is not acceptable in a lower risk population because there are not as many cancers to be found. National clinical guidelines help to define those high risk populations and to inform our decision.

Everyone shares a common goal to reduce the overall death rate from breast cancer. As heartbroken as we are about every patient who dies of cancer, we must focus our efforts on efforts to help the most people. There are many national organizations and scientific studies dedicating their resources to solving this problem. We should turn to them for guidance rather than doing more tests and spending more money on unproven and perhaps inappropriate screening. We should fund their research but wait for their results.

Thank-you,

Matthew L. Saidel MD

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